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WCC Leader Urges Halt to Nuclear "Madness"

(New Delhi) - An outstanding Christian authority on international affairs called here tonight for a halt to the "madness" of continued nuclear weapons testing and arms competition.

Declaring that "in the crucible of this nuclear space age, God is testing the worthiness of His creatures to continue their existence on earth", the Rev. Dr. O. Frederick Nolde of New York cast doubt on the sanity of those who contend that "the testing of multi-megaton nuclear weapons will promote security".

"The reality in the case is that it accelerates the armaments race and enlarges the risk of catastrophic destruction", asserted Dr. Nolde, who is director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, in an address to an evening session of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches convened here.

The CCIA is a joint agency of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council, which were integrated into a single organization at the opening session of the WCC's Third Assembly here.

"While peace rests tenuously upon a balance of terror, security in depth will be found only when the spirit controls the products of science", Dr. Nolde told a plenary session of the Assembly.

He said that his agency exists and operates "on the assumption that the churches have a right - indeed a duty - to speak to the nations for peace and justice".

Emphasizing that the World Council and the IMC "stand for peace", he said the two agencies now united into one "have sought to contribute to international goodwill and to give to peace the essential ingredients of justice, truth and freedom".

The CCIA director reiterated the hope that "world conscience may be stirred and world public opinion consolidated in order that, instead of a general resumption of (nuclear) tests, there may be a resumption of negotiations designed with all sincerity to bring about a reliable agreement to cease tests".

"There surely could be no justification either in the sight of God or in the eyes of men", he stated, "for the explosion in the atmosphere of a nuclear bomb in the 50-megaton range or above." He based his judgment on "grounds of the risk to health, the invitation to accelerate the armaments race, and the increased danger of war".

Dr. Nolde informed the Assembly that the WCC officers had "expressed their profound concern and dismay at the announcement by the Soviet Union of its unilateral decision to resume experimental explosions of nuclear tests".

He reported that he had also urged the United Nations General Assembly to appeal to the Soviet Union not to proceed with its announced intention to explode a 50-megaton weapon.

"At any time when spokesmen for any government have proposed the unilateral resumption of tests", he said, "CCIA officers have impartially registered their opposition."

He recalled that the commission and the WCC "have consistently raised the question whether any nation is justified in deciding on its own responsibility to conduct tests, when the people of other nations in all parts of the world who have not agreed may have to bear the consequences".

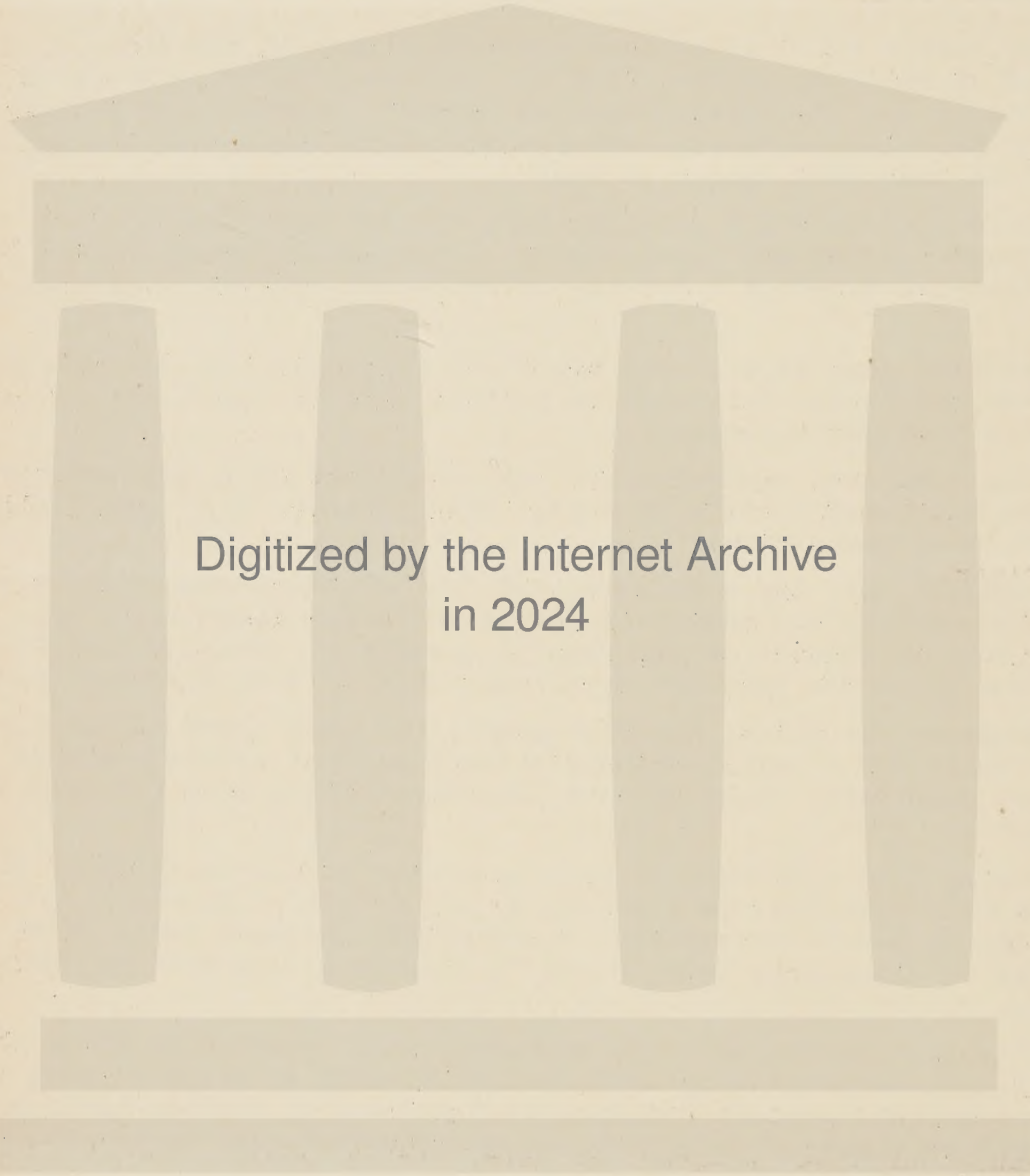
Furthermore, he noted, the two agencies in 1957 urged all governments to forego tests for a trial period "in the hope that others would do the same, a new confidence would be born, and foundations laid for reliable agreements".

Stressing that "the catastrophic potential of modern military machines does truly make premeditated recourse to war an act of madness", Dr. Nolde said the demand for "a preventive or so-called righteous war", which is still heard at times like this, "must be vigorously opposed" by Christians everywhere.

Despite the "inability of an expressed world opinion to bring the actions of nations invariably into conformity with an international standard", he cautioned against yielding to "cynicism or despair about the ultimate effectiveness of negotiation, conciliation, and an assertion of the claims of justice".

"While the United Nations must inevitably reflect the divisions of the contemporaneous scene", he said, "continuing effort is required in order that this great organization may play its indispensable role in the promotion of the peace and the advancement of justice."

In its very existence and in its varied programmes, the World Council "offers a distinctive contribution to better international relations", according to the CCIA director. "Its membership crosses frontiers of race and nationality, and in many instances its activities - fully justified in their own right - take on added significance when viewed in the perspective of international affairs."



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"The first battle-line of the WCC in its offense against war and injustice is drawn in these far-flung programmes rooted in the faith and action of its constituent members", he said. "It is on this background that the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs proceeds with its work."

EPS, Geneva

Church Aims Outlined

(New Delhi) - In another session the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. Arthur Michael Ramsey, told the Assembly that a world yearning for unity "is shocked when the Church fails to manifest it".

Speaking on the subject of "Faith and Order", Dr. Ramsey noted that the world's criticism of the Church "must rightly humble us", but that Christians should not "accept the world's conception of the matter".

"The world does not hear the call to holiness, and does not care for the truth in Christ", the archbishop said, pointing out that both holiness and truth are integrally related to unity in the Bible.

"But the world has its own care for unity, albeit conceived in a secular way", he said. "It desires that men and nations shall be joined to each other and the forces which separate them removed.

"It is not just unity - togetherness with one another - that we seek . . .", he continued. "It is for unity in truth and holiness that we work and pray, for that is Christ's supernatural gift to us. Let that always be made clear.

"A movement which concentrates on unity as an isolated concept can mislead the world and mislead us, as indeed would a movement which had the exclusive label of holiness or the exclusive label of truth."

Dr. Ramsey noted that the quest for unity involves the ascetical as well as the intellectual and the diplomatic and ethical. It further involves the negotiation of the union of the churches, and of bringing the churches into practical fellowship, he added.

"It includes the task within them all, of learning the truth in Christ, in Scripture, in the Fathers, in the liturgies, in contemporary scholarship, in the self-criticism of systems and formulations, a task in which we have been finding ourselves, thank God, rather less like rivals and rather more like fellow-learners", he said.

The Anglican primate pointed out that unity also involves acting in Christian conscience so that the Church has a voice and an impact, ministering to the homeless and hungry, and being consecrated to Christ.

"Because our task is such", he said, "it has both a divine urgency and a divine patience.

"Yet as the way of holiness cannot be hurried, and the way of truth cannot be hurried, so too there is concerning unity a divine patience. Guarding ourselves against confusing divine patience and our human sloth, we know that there is a divine patience, to be imitated in our patience with others, in our patience with ourselves, and in our patience with God's age-long patience."

EPS, Geneva

Orthodox Position Given

(New Delhi) - Speaking at the same session, a Greek Orthodox theologian declared that Church union, in Orthodox thinking, is "an absolute reality pre-established by God" and not "a 'spiritualized', sentimental, humanistic expression of good will". Dr. Nikos Nissiotis, a layman who is assistant director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Switzerland, told the Assembly:

"...The Church does not move towards unity through the comparison of conceptions of unity, but lives out of the union between God and man, realized in the communion of the Church as union of men in the Son of Man.

"We are not here to create unity but to recapture it in its vast universal dimensions. . . .

"The unity of which we speak is not something given to the Church from a source outside the Church after that Church has arisen from other causes. It is the sine qua non of the very existence of the Church implanted by the Holy Spirit among men."

This being so, he said, "the unique contribution of Orthodoxy to the discussion on church unity lies in its simple reminder that the unbroken continuity of the life of the historical Church has a far greater authority than any confessional statement of a local church which attempts to explain and justify its separateness".

"The life of the Church in itself and by itself is the most solid authority because it perpetuates the event of Pentecost", he added.

Dr. Nissiotis declared that the witness of the Orthodox churches is "not simply that of a sign-post, showing other churches the path towards unity", but includes service to unity.

Such service is possible only when the word "orthodox" is fully understood as an inclusive rather than as an exclusive term, he explained. Orthodoxy, he said, "includes all those churches and believers who seek to offer an honest confession and achieve a life which is untouched by heresies and schisms and to arrive at the wholeness of the divine revelation in Christ".

The theologian said that "this dynamic understanding" of Orthodoxy requires giving up its "defensive, confessional-apologetic attitude", which uses such slogans as "come back to us" or "let us go back to the first eight centuries".

EPS, Geneva

Youth Seen Impatient Over Slow Pace of Church Unity

(New Delhi) - The Rev. Philip A. Potter of London, also addressing the session, accused the World Council of Churches and its member bodies of not making specific demonstrations of Christian unity rapidly enough to satisfy their youth and members of the younger churches in Asia and Africa.

"We are in serious danger of driving young people into despair of the churches and therefore in flight away from them", said Mr. A. Potter, who is chairman of the World Student Christian Federation and secretary for West Africa and the West Indies for the Methodist Missionary Society of Great Britain.

The work of the Faith and Order branch of the ecumenical movement, he added, "may perish for lack of younger men and women to take it up, because they despair of anything really happening (in it)". The same thing, he said, "could equally be said about the younger churches, for whom. . .the problem of union is one of life and death".

Further, he asserted that "the real pressure and urgency" for such advance "come precisely from youth and students, the missionary movement, and the churches set in a predominantly non-Christian environment".

The former secretary of the WCC Youth Department said all these groups "cherish a dynamic rather than a static conception of the Church" and are deeply interested in the ecumenical movement, but they find their readiness to act frustrated by fixed ecclesiastical and institutional forms and policies.

Because of their "openness for the present and future in acts of obedience to God's will in the here-and-now", he urged the World Council to "take heed of the very urgent questions which they pose for Faith and Order".

Along with the basic problem that "the churches are not willing to manifest the unity which is not only given in Christ but which is given here and now in so much about which there is definite agreement", Mr. Potter cited these related issues raised by those for whom he undertook to speak:

(1) Institutionalism: "They see themselves hedged in and hampered by ecclesiastical, missionary, and even - at times - ecumenical structures . . . Our institutions are the focus around which we bar ourselves from manifesting our unity and become sterile."

(2) Bars to intercommunion among members of different churches who have received the one Christian baptism and have been incorporated in the one Body of Christ, who together worship and dedicate themselves to service inspired by the one Holy Spirit.

(3) Dominance of Faith and Order discussions by Western scholastic terminology and formulations. Such discussions ought to be brought "into the market-place of the laity and of churches cradled in radically different cultural and intellectual environments", according to Mr. Potter.

(4) "The relation between autonomous younger churches seeking to enter into union with other churches. . . and the pressures of world confessionalism in the ecumenical era."

"The peculiarity of this generation of younger people", the WSCEF chairman said, "has been their sense of churchmanship, their growing participation in the life of their churches as critical, responsible members."

"This churchmanship expresses itself in a profound awareness of their calling to witness and service in a turbulent, exciting, changing and travelling world. And such a churchmanship drives them to seek out their brethren in the faith in their locality and beyond, so that they can together witness to the faith which is given and is therefore to be shared."

EPS, Geneva

Messages Received from Orthodox Leaders

(New Delhi) - Following acceptance of the Russian Orthodox Church into WCC membership in an earlier session, a message was received from Alexis, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. Read to the Assembly by Archbishop Nikodin, head of the Russian delegation, the message declared that the preservation and consolidation of world peace "is the basic problem of the times".

In today's tense atmosphere, it said, all Christians "must resolutely call upon and induce the leaders of states to start negotiations with the aim of achieving at least agreement on universal and complete disarmament, with effective international control, and also on other problems that are a source of concern to mankind".

The message received from His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras defined unity in Christ as "the quest of our times". Such unity, he said, must find expression in "sincere co-operation and communion of love and sacrifice amongst all who confess our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour".

From the Ethiopian Orthodox Church came a message which, while praising the ecumenical movement as evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit, pointed to the inadequacy of many verbal definitions of doctrine as the cause of mutual misunderstandings and consequent schisms in the past. It asked that a closer study of the traditional doctrines be made with a view to evolving clearer and less inadequate verbal definitions.

Concerning missions and witness, the message said the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was "conscious of having been tardy all through its history in sending out preachers of the Gospel among non-Christians".

"What we need more than anything else is a renewed sense of mission to hold up before the world Jesus Christ as the Light of the World", it declared.

Speaking of "Service", the message said that Ethiopia is "struggling hard to break loose from the torpor of centuries and the best service the Church can do at present is to co-operate with the State in all its efforts. . ."

It continued: "The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is particularly conscious of a very serious situation in the continent of Africa today. As region after region of this vast continent is throwing away colonial rule and awakening to a newly self-conscious nationhood, the natural impulse for people is to throw away the religion also that has been associated with the colonial rulers. There is the grave danger of Christianity being given up as the white man's religion, unfit for coloured races. This state of affairs is further aggravated by the profession of Christianity by the leaders of the apartheid policy of South Africa. In this context, an ancient church which has been native in this continent from the early centuries of the Christian era has special opportunities and responsibilities."

EPS, Geneva

Laity's Role Discussed

(New Delhi) - Laity's role in the Church was the subject of an earlier session. Three speakers shared the platform. Mr. E. Varkey Matthew, advocate of the Supreme Court of India at Bangalore, said there is no Christian basis whatsoever for "any lawyer to wash his hands of dirty cases".

Other speakers were Dr. Klaus von Bismarck, director of the West German Broadcasting Service in Cologne, and Miss Edith M. Batten, principal of William Temple College in Rugby, England. Presiding was Bishop Otto Dibelius of Berlin, Germany.

Mr Matthew asserted that the Christian Church must stand behind the lawyer "who is duty bound to fight seemingly hopeless cases of notorious criminals and law breakers and who, in the process, becomes someone with fingers soiled by dirty affairs".

"The Christian lawyer must realize that he cannot work out his own salvation by developing his spiritual dimensions on the basis of his moral choice of right and wrong", he said.

"Instead he must own that both he and his client are caught up in the tragedy and dilemma of sin that needs forgiveness at every stage and which forgiveness is freely offered in Christ Jesus."

Mr. Matthew was sharply critical of those church members who, in the new India, have compiled a "very poor record of active political work".

He said that a large percentage of sensitive Christians are found among the moral enthusiasts in the country who, out of revulsion against corruption and compromises practised in political parties, "swear by 'partyless democracy', whatever that means".

Some Christian idealists, he added, disillusioned after a moral crusade against these continuing problems, "have left party politics, choosing Christian vocations where the ambiguities remain unexamined".

"The Church is so much engrossed in the running of its institutions and in the maintenance of its personnel that it has failed to emphasize the enormous importance of the vocation of Christians within party organizations", Mr. Matthew said.

"The few Christians who are found in the field of politics and parties have no sense of belonging as the Church has yet to develop that dimension by which political involvement through its laity becomes part of its own being."

Another panelist warned that "laymen in the dispersion" may despair if the institutionalized churches are slow to meet the challenge of the present, or deliberately pursue policies or programmes which are unrelated to the realities of the contemporary situation.

This note was sounded by Miss Edith M. Batten, principal of William Temple College in Rugby, England, which has sought to confront laymen with the relevance of the Gospel in their professional lives.

"We are continually troubled when those who have been to the college try to establish some relationship with a local church, but are unable to do so", Miss Batten remarked. "This is not because these laymen are unwilling to face the demands of the Gospel, but because the local church is unwilling to face the challenge of the laymen in this situation."

Unless this situation is changed, she warned, "we may see new 'lay movements' springing up with little regard for the faith or order of the existing churches."

In his talk, Dr. Klaus von Bismarck, director of the West German Broadcasting Service in Cologne, said the concept of the laity has been broadened since the World Council's last assembly in 1954.

There is now, he said, an "important recognition that the entire Church is living a continuous process of being gathered and scattered in everyday life".

Dr. von Bismarck said that "the ecumenical conversation on the question of the laity is (now) concentrated on how to find the right way for clergy and laity to complement one another in the different ministries of the Church".

EPS, Geneva

WCC Leaders Visit Gandhi's Memorial

The WCC's presidents and other top-ranking officials of the organization placed wreaths on Mahatma Gandhi's memorial in the Indian capital in a ceremony on Tuesday, November 21.

The five presidents are Bishop S. U. Barbieri (Argentina), Bishop Otto Dibelius (Germany), Archbishop Iakovos (USA), Metropolitan Juhanon Mar Thoma (India) and Bishop Henry Knox Sherrill (USA).

They were accompanied by Dr. Franklin Clark Fry (USA), chairman of the WCC's Central Committee, and Dr. Ernest Payne (Great Britain), vice-chairman of the Central Committee.

EPS, Geneva

India Holds Reception for Participants

The goodwill and hospitality of the Government of India to the Third Assembly was expressed at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the residence of the President of India, when the Vice-President of the Republic of India, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, received participants Tuesday, November 21.

Vice-President Radhakrishnan is one of the most distinguished of Indian intellectuals, and a student of religion. He was formerly Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions in the University of Oxford.

On duty for the reception were members of the Presidential bodyguard. The tradition of the Guard goes back over 200 years, and was formerly the Viceroy of India's bodyguard. Each man is chosen for his handsome appearance, stately bearing and horsemanship.

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